



# Cheap

Despite continually lowering hardware costs, businesses cannot simply lower their data storage budgets. Email archive management is not so cheap after all.

## Not so After All

### Email storage costs continue to grow

By Alex Cassini

Data storage has become so cheap, why should anyone care about email archive management? After all, it's easy enough to buy additional disk drives for your email servers and move on to more important concerns... right? Wrong. According to the Gartner Group, despite the fact that hardware costs will continue to decline at about 25% to 35% per year, data storage will eat up the majority of server-related budgets by 2004.

#### Email Drives the Demand for Data Storage

Driving the demand for data storage is the sheer volume of data being generated, and email leads the pack. This year, Americans will send and receive well over 6.8 trillion email messages — approximately 2.2 billion messages each day — compared with just 293 million pieces of First Class mail. Microsoft, for example, processes more than three million email messages every day. While the World Wide Web often grabs the headlines, the fact is that there is 500 times more email created every year than the stock of Web pages (in terabytes). Although a portion of this email is sent and received by individuals, most of the traffic travels via corporate email servers.

"Email is huge as far as storage goes," says Jim Stathakis, storage solutions specialist at Hewlett-Packard. "Just think how much email has grown in the past couple of years. Emails now come with attachments, so not only is the number of emails increasing, but so is the size of each message."

Indeed, one needs only to look back to the mid-1990's when most email messages were between one Kb and three Kb in size. Today, the size of a typical email (without an attachment) is around five Kb. Less than a decade ago, file attachments were rare, but today, over 20% of email comes with an attachment. As a result, an average email with an attachment is about 100Kb. This trend shows no sign of slowing. Analysts estimate the size of email and attachments is

growing at a rate of 35% per year. As a result, email has become the number one corporate storage hog. "Many companies find that their email server storage capacity has tripled over the last 18 months," says Stathakis.

#### Email Administration Storage Expense

Buying storage technology isn't really the expensive part — maintaining it is. The Gartner Group estimates that the purchase of storage solutions accounts for only 20% of storage-related expenditures. When it comes to email, administration tasks, account for 43% of support costs. Add another 20% for the cost of downtime when email systems crash or when messages become corrupted, and the ever-growing demand for email storage quickly becomes a pressing financial concern.

According to the Evaluator Group, an Englewood, Colorado, storage consultancy, data storage support costs are increasing five percent to 10% per year. This trend is not just an American phenomenon. One global study, conducted by Canadian firm, Educom TS, Inc., in 2000, identified that corporate email systems account for the lion's share of data administration costs. Out of 926 organizations surveyed, 97% said that their email stores had grown faster than predicted — in excess of 50%. Consequently, email backups consistently ran into production periods, and in 67% of the companies surveyed, restoring lost email for a single user took over 24 hours to complete. Since the time this study was completed in 2000, the issues have become an even greater imperative.

The cost of email administration, therefore, is a growing concern. According to Creative Networks, a strategic consulting and professional services firm in Palo Alto, California, organizations spend on average nearly \$200 per user each year to locate and retrieve lost email from storage. When considering lost user productivity, revenue loss and administration and management costs, companies spend more on email archive management than for all technical support and help desk combined.

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In light of the ongoing economic slowdown, experts say, most enterprises are pushing to understand and cut storage costs. "Storage is now a pain point for many organizations, and they are casting about for relief," says Nick Allen, an analyst at Gartner.

## Solutions Available

At this time, there are software solutions developed to help improve the management of corporate email systems using Microsoft Exchange. Organizations find that these solutions can help reduce email overload on corporate servers by ensuring true "single instance storage." This is a significant improvement over the vanilla MS Exchange environment found in many organizations. While marketing pundits often purport that Exchange facilitates single instance storage, the truth is that message redundancy is often found across multiple mail stores — a condition that was exacerbated with the release of MS Exchange 2000. Prior to Exchange 2000, both Forester Research and the Gartner Group estimated that an average of three extra copies of every email message (and associated attachments) wound up on corporate systems. Now, due to the expanded number of email stores available, new installations of Exchange can suffer a doubling, or even tripling, of this redundancy. The numbers can be staggering.

Single instance storage is only one part of the strategic equation, however. Not only is the volume of email on the rise, but the size of email and attachments is increasing as well. Some solutions help further reduce the demand for email storage by enabling on-the-fly file compression. Organizations find that compressing archived messages can save another 50% (on average) of archive space.

## Better Management Brings Benefits

Even with the downward trend in data storage gear, the potential savings in hardware when employing email archive management can be significant. Add the corresponding reduction in administrative expense and many of these solutions are worth consideration by your company. Peripheral benefits, like the ability to perform compliance audits efficiently, protect email against virus attacks, ensure fault tolerance and enable disaster recovery, are added justification for an email archive management strategy. As a result, many companies find a quick return on investment in all the components of an email archive solution.

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## Email Archive Management Strategy

One way to find some relief is to implement an email archive management strategy. Consider the following questions:

1. Is email growth expanding faster than you have anticipated?
2. How many times (instances) is a particular email (also attachments) stored within your organization?
3. How much space does email consume on servers, local PCs and other shared storage devices?
4. Does your company experience poor system performance as a result of email overload?
5. Do email backups exceed the available time limit?
6. Are your email users forced to delete messages so that space can be recovered?
7. How much time do system administrators spend performing email system administration?
8. Are employees restricted from using their email so that storage can be managed?

If you take the time to thoughtfully consider these questions, you may be surprised at the answers.